(e) if so, the steps proposed to be taken by Central Government regarding safety of crew members and increasing crew insurance of such boats?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) to (e) Although there have been no fatal accidents of supply vessels which are 25 years and above old, two shipping casualties have occurred *viz.*; Samudrika-10, flag India aged 21 years which sank, off Mumbai on 9th July 2007 and Samudra Suraksha, flag India aged 24 years which sank of Mumbai on 2nd August 2005. In the case of Samudrika-10, nine crew members were rescued, six lost their lives and two are still missing. Regarding Samudra Suraksha casualty occurred when the vessel hit Mumbai High North production platform. This resulted in the total loss of the platform. Out of the total of 383 personnel on the platform, 361 were rescued 10 died and 12 are missing. Out of a crew of 84 belonging to Samudra Suraksha, one person died. In both the cases, the Directorate General of Shipping have ordered a preliminary inquiry by Principal Officer, Mercantile Department, Mumbai to investigate the circumstances leading to these casualties. In case of "Samudra Suraksha", a formal investigation to be conducted Judicial Magistrate has also been ordered. As per records maintained by the Directorate General of Shipping on the registration of ships, the average age of Indian registered offshore supply vessels operating in the offshore areas is about 22 years. They are issued with statutory certificates with respect to safety, construction of ships, machinery and equipments for undertaking safe voyages during all weather conditions that include stormy seas and adverse weather conditions. They become vulnerable to storms if not maintained by the ship owner during the currency of validity of statutory certificates. The crew are engaged under the Articles of agreement as per the provisions of the Indian Merchant Shipping Act, 1958. The welfare and security measures including insurance are addressed in the collective Bargaining Agreement entered into by ship owners and Seafarers' trade unions. However, to improve crew safety, structural examination and enhanced Flag State Inspection of all Indian offshore supply vessels of more than 15 years of age has been put in place.

Sending Indian into Space

1957. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA:
SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether ISRO proposes to launch an Indian into Space;

(b) if so, whether ISRO is developing its indigenous technology for this historic event, or already proven technology in this field available with advanced countries would be utilized;

(c) the likely expenditure on this project; and

(d) the timeframe for hoisting an Indian into Space and the perspective planning of such other projects?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (SHRI PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN): (a) No, Sir. However, preliminary studies are being undertaken towards, technology development.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) and (d) Not applicable.

Village Resource Centres

†1958. SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a plan has been formulated to set up Village Resource Centres (VRC) in the villages of each block of the country with the help of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO);

(b) if so, by when this plan would be implemented; and

(c) the details of the areas about which information would be provided by the Village Resource Centres at the block level?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (SHRI PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN): (a) and (b) No, Sir. However, Village Resource Centres are being set up in association with the partner agencies (such as NGOs, Trusts, Government agencies) in selected large villages of the Country depending on the developmental needs. So far 276 VRCs have been set up by ISRO in 14 States.

(c) Village Resource Centres provide space based information and services in the areas of education, awareness creation, healthcare, vocational training and skill development, agriculture, land and water resources management, livestock management, fisheries, weather and other Information and Communication Technology (ICT) enabled services.

Projects under MPLADS

1959. SHRI MATILAL SARKAR: Will the Minister of STATISTICS AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION be pleased to state:

(a) the number of ongoing projects under MPLAD schemes all over the country;

(b) how many of them relate to 'Tsunami' reconstruction works;

(c) whether it is a fact that many important projects cannot be taken up on account of restriction in the guidelines; and

(d) whether the guidelines are relaxable according to suitability of the States?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STATISTICS AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI G.K. VASAN): (a) Based on the Monthly Progress Reports received from District Authorities till 20.8.2007, the number of ongoing works under MPLAD Scheme is 100961.

(b) There are 74 ongoing works relating to 'Tsunami' reconstruction works.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.